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ABSTRACT

The rationale and methodology for using videotape recordings to test foreign language listening comprehension are discussed. First, the advantages of using video in teaching and testing listening comprehension are examined and the specific listening skills to be developed at the beginning level are outlined. Issues in the selection of video segments to be used in testing are discussed, and guidelines for selection are provided. Transcripts of four video tests used for an elementary French program, representing the range of topics that can be covered and the variety of testing activities that can be generated, are presented. For each transcript, the target listening skill is specified, the interaction is transcribed, a number of testing options are described, and considerations in using the video are discussed, including its advantages for certain stages of learning and use of print materials in conjunction with the video. It is concluded that videos offer a unique way of training the specific listening comprehension skills of students if teaching and testing activities are properly structured. A one-page bibliography is included. (MSE)

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VIDEO IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS

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Contextualized listening comprehension as a teaching objective in the foreign language curriculum has received considerably more attention over the past fifteen or so years as the profession has been moving to redefine the notion of competency in a foreign language and to reassess the relationship between exposure to spoken language in context and the acquisition of the other three skills, namely reading, speaking and writing. The establishment of a measure of oral proficiency, based on levels that can be explained, in large part, on the amount of time that the learner is exposed to listening to the language reinvigorated our search for relevant, interesting, and authentic materials that would not only increase the amount and variety of activities aimed at developing listening comprehension, but also improve the quality time that students spend "on task". For, as Newmark pointed out several years ago, authentic materials must "consist of sufficient language whose meaning can be inferred by students who are paying attention".(1) Currently, the growth, by leaps and bounds, in both the quantity and quality of authentic video available feeds perfectly into a growing demand for such materials on the part of teachers and taps into the visual orientation of today's students. As a result, video seems to have become a fact of life in many foreign language classes. Indeed, the potential of and the benefits derived from well-planned, pedagogically sound and regular use of video at all levels of the curriculum are great when linked to language acquisition theories and to strategies aimed at developing listening comprehension skills.(2) Yet, there seems to be a perception that video is essentially an instructional technology. As a result, it has not received a great deal of attention as a component of the evaluation process. Video testing, along with the entire notion of testing listening comprehension, seems to have been relegated to what Douglas describes as "the quiet corner of the testing world".(3) As with any new technology or approach, a number of problems associated with video testing have surfaced and need to be overcome. The purpose of this paper is to offer some thoughts on the need for video testing and to provide suggestions for the preparation of video tests aimed at assessing student progress in developing listening comprehension skills. For, the very same reasons that can be given for integrating video into a classroom program can be brought to bear on a video testing program with the added advantage that student progress is monitored and teacher efficiency in the use of video materials is improved.

The primary justification for the use of video in the classroom is that it provides a multi-sensory vehicle that allows us to work with students on the development of a progressively sophisticated range of skills in listening comprehension as they move through the curriculum. At the elementary level, which is the instructional group that is addressed in this paper, the advantage of the video component is that it adds another

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dimension for training students from the the first day of the program to begin implementing strategies that are aimed at developing "global comprehension" skills,(4) or the ability to grasp the main ideas of an interaction. The ultimate goal of the course is to achieve a frame of mind and a linguistic competence that are conducive to the production of adequate responses in a progressively broadening range of situations. As Valette describes it, the goal is to train students to "learn to understand without being obligated to do mental translation."(5)

Researchers are unanimous in pointing out that listening comprehension involves several interrelated mental processes and describe it as an active, creative, complex skill to develop.(6) One benefit that seems patently clear, however, is that with the addition of the visual image, our potential for developing effective teaching strategies aimed at comprehension is greatly enhanced because of the simultaneous availability of both aural and visual stimuli which are mutually supportive of the message that is being sent. The visual cues can be especially helpful to the student who may find it either personally or intellectually difficult to identify with the content of an interaction: the video can either provide a context to which the student can relate or it can lay the foundation upon which to create a category of reference that would allow for a conversation to be understood and for the information received to be stored. Working with video, however, has taught us that the visual component supports general comprehension and that, especially for beginning language students, the process will work best if the student has been adequately prepared to process the linguistic input. As the range of topics and the amount and complexity of language are increased, we clearly expect our students to keep up with each increment of difficulty that we present. Teaching the vocabulary and the grammar contained in a video clip, however, will not suffice to help them do so. We must verify that they are making links not only with the language, but with the process and the intent of the communication in order to arrive at understanding its content. It seems, therefore, that one conclusion that we may reach about listening comprehension is that it involves not only vocabulary development or structural awareness, but also the development of a number of listening skills that lead to a greater facility to comprehend. The extent to which these skills are developed will determine the level of difficulty of an interaction that a student can understand: the greater the ability to bring cognitive and intuitive talents to bear on an exchange, the more sophisticated the level of comprehension is apt to be. Wesche proposes the use of communicative teaching and testing for specific purposes within the context of an integrated system of language use.(7) Similarly, the establishment of a list of objectives aimed at developing specific skills can help to guide a comprehensive video teaching and testing program. At the elementary level, these skills would essentially fall into four categories:

1) Listening comprehension at the level of sound:
   a. to recognize individual sounds,
   b. to recognize sounds used in combination with other sounds,

c. to recognize intonation patterns,
d. to deal with varieties of accents and rates of delivery;

2) Listening comprehension for language development:
a. to initiate vocabulary building,
b. to reinforce previously learned vocabulary,
c. to integrate the appropriate use of colloquial expressions,
d. to recognize particular structures or usages;

3) Listening comprehension for pedagogical or psychological considerations:
a. to develop coping skills,
b. to learn how to extract the gist of an interaction,
c. to make effective use of other cognitive and intuitive talents to achieve comprehension;

4) Listening comprehension for intellectual development:
a. to increase the student's understanding of the culture of the speakers of the target language,
b. to improve reasoning skills,
c. to develop observation skills,
d. to sharpen interpretive skills.

The goal of developing listening comprehension with the aid of video programming is clearly achievable if we proceed by means of sequenced objectives. There are, however, a few stipulations that would have to be made: A) that the video component should be a regular feature of the instructional program and that a specific skill or skills should be the basis for each program shown in order that students come to appreciate the true role of video in the curriculum; B) that videos selected for viewing in class or as an assigned activity must be interesting, relevant, and entertaining. In the foreign language course, however, the use of video is neither entertainment nor is it a neat way of learning language: it is strictly a mean provided by modern technology to support the progressive development of listening comprehension skills; C) that students, appreciating the fact that one of the most important contributions of video in the elementary program is that it can help to develop adaptive skills, will make a commitment to that goal. Indeed, one of the major strengths of video is that it can allow for the infusion of linguistic variety, the essence of language, into the classroom. While teacher talk is essential to the student's sense of well-being in the course, it can also serve to exacerbate feelings of dependence since teachers generally speak for the greatest portion of any given class. Greater independent functioning as a goal can be aided by early and regular exposure to different native speakers of the language.

An instructor, therefore, who uses video on a regular basis and for specific purposes and who has set levels of achievement in the area of listening comprehension has few alternatives but to check that objectives are being reached. "Once listening skill is considered a course

objective, it becomes necessary to assess student achievement in that area," states Valette.(8) As for all other foreign language skills, it is difficult to assume that progress is being made in reaching the instructional goals of the video program without some form of evaluation; outcomes, in foreign language teaching, are difficult to assume. Secondly, while it may be a self-evident proposition, it nevertheless bears repeating that an examination should be an extension of the course since its intent is to measure the knowledge and/or skills that the student has acquired in the course. Thirdly, a video testing program adds to the importance of the skill development activity by the mere fact that it gets incorporated into evaluation process. In most instances, the point needs to be made to students in a variety of ways that video, within the context of the course, has a very specific purpose.

Justification of the concept and the need for video testing, however, is easier than the implementation of a testing program. For, the single most serious problem that is encountered in the preparation of video testing is the lack of appropriate materials. While the production of video-taped foreign language programs has never been greater, most of what is being released is generally more suitable for instructional purposes than for testing. Two alternatives seem to present themselves. The first is to establish a file of video segments that would be suitable for progressively testing specific skills; a search that can prove to be long since it is generally quite difficult to find a match that emphasizes the subject matter at the level and in the manner that it needs to be tested. The same problem recurs that affected our selection of videos for instructional purposes a few years ago before textbook companies started including a video program in their packages, that is, that the producers of a video did not have individual class objectives in mind while creating their program. The other alternative, and probably the most viable for the time being, is the in-house production of tapes that reflect the content of the unit or units being studied and that assess student achievement in the skill that has been targeted for testing. In the near future, both the quantitative and qualitative growth of video materials may hopefully broaden not only the possibility of effectively teaching listening comprehension by means of video materials, but also of accurately measuring the progress that students are making in this area.

Before reviewing a few of the videos that were developed as a component of the elementary French testing program, it would probably be helpful to present the guidelines that were followed in their preparation:

1. Each clip targeted a specific skill to be examined;
2. The video-taped situations and conversations were in keeping with the content and the spirit of the unit or units being studied. In other words, every attempt was made for the videos to be natural spin-offs of classroom activities.
3. Every effort was made to make the segment as natural and as real as possible: a minimum of direction was given to the participants in the taping. They were told that this activity was intended for an

elementary French class and were shown a list of words with which the students should be familiar. They were invited to integrate some of the vocabulary into their conversation, but they were also told that they should not feel bound by the list.

4. No script was provided to those who participated, only general guidelines as to the direction that the interaction should take.
5. Authentic language was used in all scenes. Participants were asked to speak at a pace that is natural and normal for them.

The following are transcriptions of four video tests that have been developed for an elementary French program. Each was chosen as a model to give a flavor of the range of topics that can be covered as well as the variety of testing activities that can be generated from the video-taped programs. Each one also provides the context to discuss some of the important considerations relative to listening comprehension testing. The first three can be administered along with the first, second and third one-hour examinations or at the end of each of the first three months of the semester. The fourth can be used at the end of the first month of the second semester after students have gained a solid understanding of the functioning of the French passé composé and imparfait. The skill to be evaluated is identified at the beginning of each program. Testing formats are also suggested for each segment, as well as a general discussion of some of the advantages derived from video testing in each instance and of general guidelines to consider while preparing such examinations. Some of the testing formats are adapted from Ur's study which presents a wide range of options in testing and teaching listening comprehension.(9) Finally, in the preparation of both the video-taped scenes and the testing activities, Canale's and Rivers' recommendations served as the production motto. The former offers the following principle in the development of receptive language tests: "Attempt to elicit the best performance from test takers by presenting tasks that are fair, important in themselves and interesting in themselves,"(10) while the latter contends that "students should be rewarded in final grading with full consideration for this skill (listening comprehension) in which they excel."(11)

* * *

VIDEO QUIZ NUMBER 1
"Numbers"

SKILL: To identify two and three-syllable sound clusters of known words, in this case, double-digit numbers.

SCRIPT: Une dame semble avoir perdu ses lunettes et demande à un jeune homme de composer un numéro de téléphone pour elle.

La dame: Jeune homme! J'ai oublié mes lunettes. Est-que vous pouvez composer pour moi un numéro?
Le jeune homme: Bien sûr.
La dame: 85-70-66.

La dame: Il n'y a personne?
Le jeune homme: Non.
La dame: Alors, je vais vous donner un autre numéro.
La dame: 42-63-88.
La dame: Allô Suzanne? Est-ce que vous êtes libre ce soir?

TESTING OPTIONS:

A. Students are asked to write down the telephone numbers that the woman asks the young man to dial for her. They do this as the tape is being shown in class. In the testing process, at least three options are available to the instructor, depending on the purpose assigned to the activity:
   - The exercise can be used to check sound recognition only, a list of numbers can be printed on the answer sheet, and students are asked to identify the numbers that they heard. For example:
     45 85 50 7 70 10 60 76 66
   - The exercise can be used to measure comprehension of the oral message while also verifying that students heard the correct numbers and that they can reproduce it graphically rather than simply identifying the sound. They are therefore asked to fill in the blanks: _____ - _____ - _____
   - If the exercise is intended to measure sound recognition and spelling skills, students can be asked to write out the numbers that they heard.

Discussion:

The use of the video to deliver an activity as elementary as this one may seem arbitrary at first. Conceding that this is the kind of testing activity that most of us have done in class, there are nevertheless advantages that can be derived from the use of the video format and that should be considered:

1. A context is provided for a potentially real situation, one that would be more difficult to set up in the classroom. Consequently, students are participating in the meaningful use of language within the context of a testing situation. Since the meaningful use of language is stressed in the course, examiners should seek ways to make the testing process coincide with course objectives.

2. In a short video such as this, exploitation of the visual by means of the setting, gestures or actions can preclude the instructor from having to introduce a context either orally or in writing. This process produces immediate comprehension, gets the student's attention and places him/her in a position of control with respect to what is taking place.

3. Probably the most valuable contribution of the video in this sample is the fact that students get to hear another native speaker of French using the same number combinations that the teacher has been using in class for a week or so and is able to understand him/her when it counts. In the long range of skills that need to be worked on in

improving listening comprehension, this is a valuable first step after the first few weeks of classes.

* * *

VIDEO QUIZ NUMBER 2
"An Interactive Video Quiz"

SKILL: To test for comprehension and recognition of memorized formulas spoken by a stranger in a potentially real setting.

SCRIPT: Dans le bureau d'un conseiller. Stephane attend son tour pour discuter son programme d'études. Il entre en conversation avec un étudiant/une étudiante qui arrive aussi pour voir son conseiller.

Stephane: Bonjour! Comment vas-tu?
_____: _____
Stephane: Je m'appelle Stephane. Et toi?
_____: _____
Stephane: Es-tu américain?
_____: _____
Stephane: Je suis un étudiant français et j'étudie les maths et la philosophie. Et toi?
_____: _____
Stephane: Je suis ici pour voir mon conseiller. Et toi?
_____: _____
Stephane: Quelle heure est-il?
_____: _____
Stephane: Je suis là depuis vingt minutes et je déteste ça.
Stephane: As-tu envie de prendre un café à la cafétéria plus tard?
_____: _____
Stephane: O.K. A bientôt! Salut!
_____: _____

TESTING OPTIONS:

A. Students view the video tape twice and are asked to record oral answers on an audio tape as the second viewing is taking place.

B. Subsequent to A. above, students can be given a copy of the script of the videotaped segment and can be asked to write the oral responses that they made on the audio tape or to produce a corrected version if they feel that they did not respond appropriately during the oral segment.

C. Students are given a copy of the script and are asked to fill in the blanks as the tape is being played. The VCR can be stopped at appropriate spots in order to give students the chance to complete their written responses.

D. Students are given a sheet of paper that contains only blank lines on

which they can write their responses to Stephane's oral questions. As in C, the VCR can be stopped to allow time for students to write.

E. A follow-up section can be added, one that further personalizes the topic. Students can be asked either written questions requiring written answers or oral questions requiring written answers such as:
1) Comment s'appelle ton conseiller?
2) Est-il américain ou français?
3) Est-il/elle professeur de maths?
4) Détestes-tu attendre (faire la queue)?
5) Aimes-tu aller à la cafétéria?

Discussion:
One of the realities of teaching and testing listening comprehension is that skill levels can only be determined via another skill such as writing, drawing, speaking, executing a command, or the like. Video quiz number 1 is based principally on the recognition of multiple choice options as the tape is being played and/or on post-viewing writing as means of checking the level of comprehension. In video quiz number 2, the preferred vehicle for testing is the oral response approach since most of the questions asked in the situation presented above have been practiced by the students among themselves or with the instructor on a number of occasions and in a variety of contexts. Indeed, the scenario used above was taken from a list of topics developed for the oral/oral sections of regular examinations and from which students randomly choose a context in which to place a conversation with other students; this interaction is presented in front of the instructor and is rated as it is taking place. The difference here is that a number of questions are put together within a possible interaction with a native speaker of the language and presented at a normal rate of delivery. The dimension that is made possible by the video is that students are not reacting to classroom language, but to authentic French.

* * *

VIDEO QUIZ NUMBER 3
"Ordering from a menu"

SKILL: To check for comprehension of an interaction on a topic with which students are generally familiar, their ability to recognize a recently learned sets of sounds and to note details and follow directions.

SCRIPT: Un jeune américain et une jeune américaine sont dans un restaurant français et se préparent à commander.

Le garçon: Bonsoir, monsieur dame. Ça va? Vous êtes prêts à commander? Qu'est-ce que vous allez prendre ce soir?
Le jeune homme: Les huîtres, comment sont-elles ce soir?
Le garçon: Les huîtres ne sont pas fraîches aujourd'hui. Je ne les recommande pas. Elles ne sont pas bonnes, les huîtres,

non. Et vous, mademoiselle?

La jeune fille: Qu'est-ce que c'est les moules à la provençale?

Le garçon: Ah! Les moules à la provençale, elles sont très bonnes aujourd'hui. C'est une spécialité du chef. Elles sont très très bonnes, oui.

La jeune fille: Merci.

Le garçon: Et vous, monsieur, qu'est-ce que vous pensez prendre comme soupe, plat principal?

Le jeune homme: La bouillabaisse maison, est-ce que c'est bon?

Le garçon: La bouillabaisse, elle est très bonne, mais il faut la commander pour deux personnes. Elle est très très bonne.

Le jeune homme: Merci.

Le garçon: Oui.

La jeune fille: Le homard à l'américaine?

Le garçon: Oui, le homard, c'est très bon. C'est une spécialité du chef aussi, le homard. Mais malheureusement, le homard n'est pas en saison. Je regrette.

Le jeune homme: Dites-moi, les quenelles de brochet sauce aurore ... ?

Le garçon: Les quenelles, c'est très bon. C'est aussi une spécialité du chef, les quenelles, mais il faut les commander le jour d'avant parce qu'il faut très longtemps pour préparer. C'est pour ça.

La jeune fille: Décrivez, s'il vous plaît, le chateaubriand en croûte sauce béarnaise.

Le garçon: Le chateaubriand, c'est un filet mignon, un gros filet mignon, mais c'est pour deux aussi... et c'est très bon. C'est très tendre, n'est-ce pas, et c'est servi avec une sauce béarnaise... et c'est servi dans une croûte, dans une pâtisserie, n'est-ce pas?... et malheureusement, il faut attendre une demi-heure. Si vous n'êtes pas pressée, c'est bien. Mais si vous êtes pressée, le chateaubriand, ça prend beaucoup de temps à le préparer. Mais c'est très bon, très très bon.

Le jeune homme: La spécialité du chef, qu'est-ce que c'est?

Le garçon: La spécialité, c'est les paupiettes de veau farcies et ça, c'est vraiment ... le chef, il fait ça très très bien, n'est-ce pas? Les paupiettes, c'est une escalope de veau qui est farcie avec de la saucisse et des épices et c'est servi avec une sauce chasseur. C'est formidable. C'est formidable. Ça, je recommande vraiment la spécialité du chef.

La jeune fille: Qu'est-ce que c'est les endives braisées?

Le garçon: Les endives braisées, ce sont des endives, bien sûr. L'endive, c'est un légume. Elles sont braisées au four et elles sont servies avec du fromage, du gruyère. Mais malheureusement, l'endive, ce n'est pas en saison. C'est malheureux. Voilà.

Le garçon: Alors, si vous n'êtes pas prêts à commander, je reviendrai dans quinze minutes.

TESTING OPTIONS:

A. Students are told to be attentive to the comments and suggestions of the waiter as the video is being shown. They are encouraged to take notes on the copy of the menu that is provided to them. After the tape has been played, they are asked to order an hors d'oeuvre, a soup, an entree and a vegetable from the same menu that the students in the video scene had in front of them. They are expected, of course, not to order those items that the waiter said were not particularly good, those that were not in season, those that had to be ordered the day before or those that are intended for more than one person.

B. An additional component can be added to the examination, one that asks specific questions about the menu. Students can answer questions such as "Which entrees did the waiter highly recommend?" or "What is the chef's special?". They are told to refer to the menu, thus precluding the need to memorize each item or its spelling. Their responses provide indications as to how well they were able to keep up with the conversation.

DISCUSSION:

This program is clearly much longer than the two that preceded it. In the first place, the students, at that point in their development when this test is administered, are better able to keep up with somewhat longer interactions in French. Secondly, they have worked with the menu and are therefore prepared to deal with the items that appear on it. Essentially, the video deals with the recognition of recently learned vocabulary by placing these words in a context where parts of previously learned expressions such as ne pas être en saison, il faut attendre une demi-heure, c'est pour deux personnes are recombined and presented in a real context. The test of comprehension is achieved by adding limitations to the availability of certain dishes. It is important to note that students have copies of the menu in front of them. The intent of working directly with the menu is twofold: to add to the reality of the situation and to make of this activity a test of comprehension and not of memorization. Richards cautions that many "listening activities focus on retrieval of information from long-term memory rather than on the processing activities themselves".(12) He includes among these true/false questions about the content of a passage. The purpose here is to check that important information about a relatively complex task, which reading a menu can more often than not be, in order to allow the participant in the activity to take the next step, which is to effectively perform the task of ordering from the menu.

* * *

VIDEO QUIZ NUMBER 4
"The Past"

SKILL: To measure the progress that students are making in comprehending a sustained narration.

Chez Alain

DINDE AUX MARRONS.....350F
(EN SAISON/SERT QUATRE PERSONNES)

COQ AU VIN.....63 F

LA SPECIALITE DU CHEF

Paupiettes de Veau Farcies 80F

LÉGUMES

HARICOTS VERTS PERSILLADE..... 12F

TOMATES PROVENCALES..... 10F

POMMES DE TERRE LYONNAISE.....18F

ENDIVES BRAISÉES.....25F

MACÉDOINE DE LÉGUMES DU JARDIN.....20F

FROMAGES

PLATEAU DE FROMAGES VARIÉS.....18F

YAOURT/ PETIT SUISSE.....15F

DESSERTS

TARTE AUX FRUITS DU JOUR.....25F
(DEMANDEZ À VOTRE SERVEUR QUELLE EST LA TARTE D'AUJOURD'HUI)
GLACES/PARFUMS VARIÉS.....20F

SOUFFLÉ AU GRAND MARNIER.....75F
(POUR DEUX PERSONNES/30 MINUTES D'ATTENTE)
CRÈME CARAMEL.....15F

OEUFS À LA NEIGE.....45F
(N'EST PAS TOUJOURS DISPONIBLE/ DEMANDEZ À VOTRE SERVEUR)

Chez Alain

HORS D'OEUVRE

HUÎTRES .....30F LES SIX

PATÉ DE CAMPAGNE.....25 F

ASSIETTE DE CHARCUTERIE VARIÉE.....36F

SAUMON FUMÉ.....75F

ESCARGOTS DE BOURGOGNE.....45F.

MOULES À LA PROVENCALE.....25F

SOUPES

SOUPE À L'OIGNON GRATINÉE.....15F

BOUILLABAISSE MAISON.....85F

SOUPE AUX POIREAUX ET POMMES DE TERRE.....20F

POISSONS, CRUSTACÉS ET FRUITS DE MER

TRUITE AUX AMANDES.....60F

HOMARD À L'AMÉRICAINE.....120F

MOULES MARINIÈRES.....50F

COQUILLES ST. JACQUES.....75F

QUENELLES DE BROCHET SAUCE AURORE.....125F

VIANDES ET VOLAILLES

TOURNEDOS MAÎTRE D'HÔTEL.....110F

CHATEAUBRIAND EN CROÛTE SAUCE BÉARNAISE.....120F

CANARD À L'ORANGE.....95F

SCRIPT: Une française décrit son arrivée à New York de France il y a quelques années. Elle a fait le voyage en bateau.

Ce qu'il y avait d'impressionnant, c'était ces bâtiments d'une hauteur gigantesque. Dans la nuit, ces bâtiments étaient illuminés; on voyait de minuscules petits carrés illuminés à la façade de ces bâtiments. Naturellement, Nous n'avons pas pu dormir; tout le monde était si animé à la pensée du débarquement qu'on est allé se coucher mais personne n'a fermé l'oeil et on s'est levé le lendemain matin à sept heures, impatient de sortir. Malheureusement, il y avait la douane qui prend beaucoup de temps. Malheureusement, j'étais derrière une jeune femme qui avait beaucoup d'argent et qui avait fait des achats importants dans des magasins de haute couture. Et naturellement, l'agent de la douane lui a demandé d'ouvrir sa malle et on a trouvé des vêtements magnifiques avec l'étiquette de grands couturiers de Paris et naturellement on a dit: "Mademoiselle, il y a 30%, 20% de taxes à payer sur ces vêtements". Elle en avait un certain nombre. Il a fallu regarder, puisqu'elle n'avait pas déclaré ces vêtements, l'employé des douanes lui a fait vider toute sa malle et plusieurs valises et cela a pris un temps considérable. On a fait le calcul de ce qu'elle devait et c'était une somme énorme. Elle n'avait pas l'argent nécessaire. Alors, on lui a permis de téléphoner à papa à New York pour qu'il veuille bien envoyer l'argent nécessaire de manière à ce que sa fille puisse sortir du bateau et entrer dans la ville. Et moi, j'étais par derrière. Et levée à sept heures du matin, j'ai pu sortir seulement à deux heures de l'après-midi.

TESTING OPTIONS:

A. The student is provided with a sheet of paper containing a number of sketches that illustrate scenes described in the story. The student is asked to establish a chronological sequence that coincides with the narration as the tape is being played.

B. The instructor distributes multiple choice or true/false questions on the story before the tape is played. This process allows the student to listen specifically for the answers to the prepared questions. For example:
   1. Ce sont les grands bâtiments qui ont impressionné la dame. V/F
   2. La nuit de son arrivée à New York, elle a bien dormi. V/F
   3. Elle s'est réveillée de bonne heure le lendemain matin. V/F
   4. La jeune femme devant elle à la douane n'avait rien à déclarer V/F
   5. La jeune femme a téléphoné à son père. V/F

   Alternatively, if the skill level of the students is sufficiently advanced, they are asked to take notes on the narration as the tape is being played. At the conclusion of the videotaped segment, they can be asked to answer the same or a similar set of questions.

C. The student is given a transcript of the narration. All the verbs in either the passé composé or the imparfait however, have been replaced by a blank line which the student is requested to fill as the tape is being played.

D. The narration can also be used as a springboard to another segment of the exam in which students, working from their notes on the narration, can be asked to write a brief composition on their first visit to a particular place and/or to describe an incident that may have occurred.

DISCUSSION:
This sample is clearly more difficult not only because it is sustained narration, but also because all the information is provided by one person. It is included here to illustrate the flexibility of video tests since any one or all four of the testing options, used individually or consecutively, are available to the tester. Placed within the context of course objectives that aim for the comprehension of sustained narration and the description of limited yet sequenced actions in the past, this program allows for a check of general comprehension (Options A and B), and/or of the student's ability to recognize the use of the passé composé and the imparfait in context and to be able to write the appropriate forms of the verbs (Option C). The program can also eventually serve as a model for the creation of a short narrative in the past that requires the appropriate use of these tenses (Option D).

* * *

CONCLUSION:

The four video tests presented here were chosen so as to highlight certain considerations that are essential to the process of testing and, to a certain extent, of teaching listening comprehension via that medium. Video offers a unique way of training our students in developing specific listening comprehension skills if teaching and testing activities are properly structured. Indeed, part of the potential of video use, especially at the elementary level, seems to lie in the possibilities that it offers for students to develop strategies in dealing with language. Canale suggests that reading and listening comprehension, for example, "may resemble one another at a deeper level more than they differ on the surface."(13) Does this imply that strategies for acquiring certain skills in one area may carry over into the other area, thus making the learning and teaching process more effective? Research does not yet seem to have found the answer to this question. There is no doubt, however, that students will become better listeners if they are afforded opportunities to listen and if they are provided the keys to become strategic listeners. Listening comprehension of authentic language as an objective of foreign language learning will continue to acquire considerable importance. As the point of departure or first modality to be emphasized in the elementary course, it points to a greater role for video in the instructional program. If, as Altman predicts, "video materials become the basis for textbooks or are conceived simultaneously with them",(14) we need to start exploring ways of effectively testing the strategies that lead to successful skill development in a video-based instructional format.

Notes

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13. Canale. op.cit.: 349.
14. Altman. op.cit.: 168.